

THE REYKJAVIK PARAMETERS FOR DEMOCRACY

A Council of Europe framework to enhance democratic systems



WHAT ARE THEY?

— To help strengthen democracy and address democratic backsliding, the Council of Europe has developed the Reykjavik Parameters for Democracy.

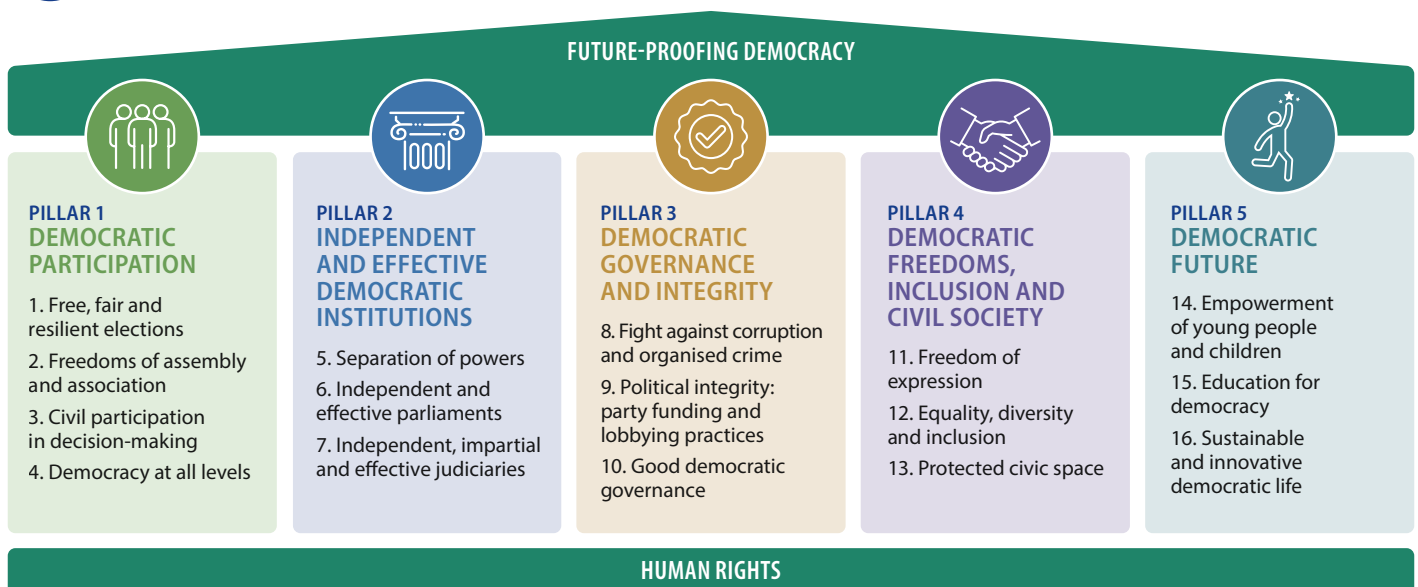
They set out **46 basic practical democratic requirements** for democracy to work well.

They are based on Council of Europe **treaties, recommendations and other instruments** and should be applied in line with human rights.

Member states can use them as a **guide to self-assess their democratic systems**.



PILLARS COVERING 16 VITAL AREAS OF DEMOCRATIC LIFE



HOW TO USE THE PARAMETERS



SELF-ASSESS

Countries use the Parameters as a guide to look at the functioning of their democracies



IDENTIFY

Strengths, gaps and challenges are identified



SET PRIORITIES

National authorities focus on areas where reforms are needed



LEARN AND IMPROVE

Good practices are identified and shared supporting mutual learning



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO APPLY THE PARAMETERS?

- Do national laws and practice guarantee judicial independence?
- Do citizens have accessible, inclusive and effective opportunities to participate in public decision-making?
- Are journalists and media organisations effectively protected from attacks, intimidation and unlawful pressure?



WHO CAN USE THE PARAMETERS?

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

To review national legislations, policies and practices and identify shortfalls

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACADEMIA

To identify shortfalls and trends and promote debate and accountability of reforms

CITIZENS

To better understand how democracy works



Contribution to the
New Democratic Pact for Europe



PILLAR 1 DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION



PILLAR 2
INDEPENDENT
AND EFFECTIVE
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS



PILLAR 3
DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE
AND INTEGRITY



PILLAR 4
DEMOCRATIC
FREEDOMS,
INCLUSION AND
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PILLAR 5
DEMOCRATIC
FUTURE

WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION?

— Democratic participation is about giving people meaningful opportunities to take part in democratic life at national, regional, and local levels.



FREE, FAIR AND RESILIENT ELECTIONS

The legislation ensures that elections are **free, fair** and **compliant** with democratic safeguards.

Suffrage is **universal, equal, free, secret** and **direct**.

Electoral communication and campaigns are **transparent, fair** and **do not undermine the integrity** of election results.

Media coverage of campaigns is **independent, plural, fair, balanced** and **free from interference**.

Specific rules and procedures for **referendums** are in place.

Election management and oversight are conducted with **impartiality, transparency** and **independence** from politically motivated manipulation.

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THEMATIC AREAS

FREEDOMS OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION



Freedom of peaceful assembly, including online, is guaranteed.

Freedom of association, including online, is guaranteed, and associations can exercise their rights and access funding, and they operate with **transparency**.

DEMOCRACY AT ALL LEVELS



Local and regional authorities **have the power and resources** to manage a significant part of public affairs and are consulted on all matters which concern them directly.

Co-ordination and co-operation between levels of government respect the principles of **good democratic governance**.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING



Policymaking reflects **citizens' legitimate needs** and **expectations**.

Citizens and civil society can effectively **participate in decision-making**.



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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



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WHAT ARE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS?

— In a functioning democracy, independent branches of government share power: a parliament represents people and makes laws, an executive governs while remaining transparent and accountable, and courts apply the law fairly to everyone, in an independent and impartial manner.



SEPARATION OF POWERS



The legislative, executive and judicial branches operate **independently** and **without excessive concentration of powers**.



Parliaments oversee and control the executive, including its power to legislate, with clearly defined and strictly limited exceptions.

Government actions are **transparent**, **accountable**, and **oversight is ensured**.



INDEPENDENT, IMPARTIAL AND EFFECTIVE JUDICIARIES



Judicial independence and impartiality are guaranteed.

Accountability and transparency of the judiciary is ensured.

Prosecutors are **objective, impartial, and accountable**.



Everyone can **access justice effectively**.



3 THEMATIC AREAS

INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTS



A **pluralist** political system allows representation of **diverse interests**.



Integrity frameworks and the regulation of financing ensure the effective functioning of parliaments.

The role and participation of the parliamentary opposition is regulated, enabled and respected.



Parliamentary immunity guarantees that members of parliament can fulfil their democratic mandate.



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PILLAR 1
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PILLAR 2
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PILLAR 3
**DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE
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PILLAR 4
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WHAT ARE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND INTEGRITY?

— Democratic governance and integrity ensure that public institutions and officials act transparently, accountably, and in the public interest.



FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME



Integrity frameworks are in place to **prevent corruption**.



Anti-corruption and anti-money laundering authorities act with the necessary independence and integrity, and can operate without undue influence.



A **deterrent legal framework** allows an effective fight against corruption and money laundering.



GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE



Public institutions and administrations are **transparent, accountable** and **serve the public good**.

Public institutions and interventions are designed and implemented to effectively meet **clearly set objectives**, efficiently allocating and using available resources to respond to citizens' legitimate needs and expectations without discrimination.



3 THEMATIC AREAS

POLITICAL INTEGRITY: PARTY FUNDING AND LOBBYING PRACTICES



The **financing** of political parties, campaigns and candidates is **regulated** and independently monitored.



Lobbying activities are regulated to ensure transparency.



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WHAT ARE DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS?

— Democratic freedoms ensure that everyone can express their opinions and access information freely and safely, that the media is free, independent and diverse, that equality, diversity and inclusion are protected, and that civil society can operate in an enabling environment.



FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Freedom of expression and media freedom are **guaranteed** and **protected**.

Media pluralism and **cultural diversity** ensure that a variety of voices are heard.

Journalists and others who speak out on issues of public interest are protected from intimidation, threats and violence.

Individuals of all age groups and with diverse backgrounds can **navigate** the (digital) media environment **responsibly** and **critically**.

The use of algorithms and **AI systems** online respects human rights, and the principles of transparency, accountability and non-discrimination.



PROTECTED CIVIC SPACE

Civil society actors and **human rights defenders** operate in a safe and enabling environment that upholds fundamental freedoms, facilitates participation and ensures protection from undue restrictions or threats.



3 THEMATIC AREAS

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Effective protection is ensured against **discrimination**, **hate speech** and **hate crime**.



All individuals can equally **access** and **enjoy their rights** and participate.

Gender equality is promoted, and **gender-based violence** against women and girls and sexism are combatted.



Social protection and **minimum levels of welfare** are ensured.



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HOW WOULD A DEMOCRATIC FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

— A democratic future is built on empowering young people and children to participate fully in democratic life, providing education that fosters active citizenship, and promoting sustainable, innovative approaches to democracy to respond to technological change and the challenges of tomorrow.



EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

Young people and children can

- **access and fully exercise their rights and freedoms; and**
- **participate in matters affecting them.**



SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE DEMOCRATIC LIFE



Public policy focuses on **long-term** sustainable goals and impact.

Public institutions are **open to change and innovation**.

Democratic institutions and processes and individuals' rights are **protected in contexts where AI systems** and digital technologies are employed.

International co-operation for democracy ensures the protection and promotion of democratic principles and practices.



3 THEMATIC AREAS

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY



Formal, non-formal and informal education prepares learners for life as active citizens in diverse democratic societies.



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